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ABSTRACT

The evaluation expectations for supervisors observing teacher effectiveness in the classroom are discussed. The classroom observer can identify and describe teaching effectiveness. A trained supervisor should have many frameworks for observing teachers based on the needs of the teacher, type of lesson, and maturity of the students. The use of preordinate and responsive evaluation techniques reduces bias and error in observation. Clear operational definitions of ambiquous terms will aid in communication between the classroom teacher and the observer. The observer should record relevant aspects of classroom teaching behaviors in a reliable and valid manner. A supervisor can aid a teacher in many ways. It is of the utmost importance that the observer and the teacher fully understand each other's frame of reference. The classroom observer must conduct several observations to insure a reliable measure of the teacher's ability. The framework of students' motivation by the classroom teacher was detailed as an illustration of methods supervisors may use to improve teacher effectiveness. (DWH)

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REASONABLE EVALUATION EXPECTATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS OBSERVING CLASSROOM EFFECTIVENESS

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REASONABLE EVALUATION EXPECTATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS OBSERVING CLASSROOM EFFECTIVENESS

Most contemporary clinical supervision models for the evaluation of classroom teacher effectiveness rely on classroom observation. Classroom observation gives us a view of the functioning of the classroom available from no other source.

However, let us begin with an admission: There is little evidence that classroom observation and evaluation as it is currently conceived has had any appreciable effect on improving the quality of instruction. The literature supports the conclusion that teachers view classroom observation as part of the system that exists, but that it does not play an important role in their professional lives.

There are at least two assumptions as to why this condition exists. The first is that supervisors spend most of their time in administrative type activites rather than in direct support of the teacher activities such as observing classroom teaching. The second is that supervisors do not use principles of evaluation theory in observing and reporting classroom observation. The first of these assumptions can be validated by examining the use of supervisors' time. The second assumption will constitute the matter of this paper.

The nature of educational evaluation theory has been the focus of study, debate and action throughout this century. However, some of the more widely recommended and accepted evaluation principles have not found their way into the techniques of classroom observation.

The following is a list of reasonable evaluation expectations for supervisors observing classroom teaching, given the frequency with which the concepts behind them have been endorsed over the years.

First, the classroom observer can identify and describe classroom teaching effectiveness.

If the classroom observer is not skilled in identifying the elements of effective teaching, he will not see them in observing teachers. If he does not see them, it will not be because these things are not there to see, record and measure. It will be because he does not know what to look for and how to record it; in short, he does not know how to evaluate classroom teaching.

It is believed that a trained supervisor can assess the effectiveness of teachers by watching them teach. Understanding of the nature of effective teaching is a prerequisite to effective classroom supervision. Classroom observation plays its proper role when an attempt is made to gain insight into the nature of effective teaching.

The classroom observer should be able to use a set of frameworks which help him observe and analyze the performance of teachers. If a teacher is doing a good job or is having difficulty using pleasant fefeling tones or helping students be successful, the observer should use an observation ramework which emphasizes motivation theory (see Appendix A). Or if the teacher is doing a good job or having difficulty in approaching the subject matter in a direct, businesslike way, then a framework emphasizing time effectiveness would be appropriate. There are many frameworks for observing teacher effectiveness. The classroom observer should be able to utilize a variety of frameworks depending on the needs of the teacher, type of lesson and the maturity of the students.

Second, the classroom observer utilizes an evaluation approach which is broad enough to include measuring those unintended effects as well as a prescribed set of agreed expectations.

Almost all appraches to clinical supervision start with a preobservation conference. The preobservation conference is usually a time for the teacher and supervisor to

reach explicit agreements as to what the supervisor will be observing. The classroom observation consists of gathering performance data and comparing this data to the prescribed set of agreed expectations. This preordinate approach to teacher evaluation is based on the assumption that all the relevant issues and questions can be defined prior to the actual classroom lesson.

Many important issues will not be apparent at the preobservation stage, but will emerge and become clarified only as the teaching lesson procedes. The responsive approach to teacher evaluation allows the observer enough flexibility to focus on emerging problems the teacher might have during the lesson. Responsive evaluation is evaluation based on what people do naturally to evaluate things: they observe and react. In this approach, the assumption is made that many important issues will not be apparent in the planning stages or preobservation conference but will merge and become clarified only as the classroom lesson procedes. The approach the teacher uses in a lesson is anticipated, but not prescribed.

The advantage of using both preordinate and responsive evaluation techniques is that it reduces bias and error resulting from a narrow focus.

Third, the classroom observer reports information gained from the observation in a manner which the teacher understands.

It is important for the teacher to understand the classroom observer's frame of reference and for the observer to understand the teacher's. Subjectivity and poor communication can be reduced by developing clear operational definitions of ambiguous terms. An example of developing clear operational definitions of classroom evaluation terms can be found in Appendix A.

Fourth, the classroom observer can record relevant aspects of classroom teaching behaviors in a reliable and valid manner.

Assuming that the builder of the frameworks and rating scales knows something about the nature of effective teaching, it may be expected that ratings on the scale will be valid measures of teaching effectiveness. However, for the judgments to be valide, the observer must record evidence which indicates the correct use or abuse of the elements contained in the framework. This record of classroom behavior must be recorded as they occur, with minimum time between observation of a behavior and the recording of it. Typically, teacher and student behaviors are recorded and then placed into advanced organizer categories of the frameworks. The observer may be gathering data on several frameworks at the same time.

APPENDIX A

MOTIVATING STUDENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR OBSERVING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

The conversation in many teacher lounges centers on how teachers can motivate students. "If I could just get John interested," or "Why doesn't she listen when I give directions?"

How can supervisors help teachers who are having difficulty motivating students? Many of the student discipline and student academic learning problems relate to the inability of classroom teachers to motivate students. To assist teachers needing help, the supervisor should be able to identify the correct and incorrect uses and the abuses of the principles of motivation (figure 1). There are at least five basic observable motivation generalizations which have been identified by both Hunter (1967) and Wlodkowski (1978) which the supervisor needs to consider in helping classroom teachers improve their skills in motivating students. The five motivation generalizations are: interest, level of concern, feeling tone, knowledge of results and success.

Observing Interest

Students are motivated to do things that interest them. If teachers can increase students' interest, their motivation will increase. Students are more interested when they are actively participating psychologically or physically in the learning process. Interest is the student's mental and emotional willingness to get involved in the learning process. Teachers can recognize current student interest by being alert to their culture, friends, social and play activities, and previous learning experiences.

The supervisor can observe the teacher correctly using the principle of interest: (1) if the teacher finds out what students' interests are and relates learning

activities to them. Relating the activity or question to something that the learner is interested in makes the learning activity more meaningful.

Examples:

"Tim, your team scored eight runs in the baseball game. The other team scored three runs. By how many runs did your team win?"

or

"The diagram of a sentence provides us with a graphic analysis much like the diagram used by the football coach."

(2) if the teacher changes the style as well as the content of learning activities. The teacher should do things in a different or novel way by mixing the style of learning to include paper-and-pencil tasks, board work, concrete materials and oral problem solving. This can mean varying the presentation process from lecturing to discussion; varying the group configuration from entire class activities to small group work; varying the student behavior from writing to large muscle movement games; and varying the location from anywhere inside the class to anywhere outside it.

Example:

"Today instead of writing a paragraph describing the character, you are to do a pantomime showing how you think the character would walk, stand and act." The class will divide into two teams to identify the other team's characters.

(3) if the teacher makes student reaction and involvement essential parts of the learning process. The goal is to allow the student to become a part of the learning activity. When the student is an inclusive element in the learning

process, it is more difficult for his attention to wander.

Example:

The teacher can use active investigation methods, such as experiments and puzzles, or can create learning situations where students are active participants through processes such as role playing, discussions, team projects and the construction of models.

Observing Level of Concern

If students have no concern, there is no motivation. If the level of concern is too high, the student either "gives up" or becomes so emotional that this emotion gets in the way of learning or performing. In almost every classroom, there are students who exhibit no concern or too much concern.

The supervisor can observe the effective teacher appropriately increasing or decreasing level of concern. Teachers can help motivate students by first identifying students who need their level of concern adjusted and then by employing techniques which either increase or decrease level of concern.

Examples of increasing level of concern:

"The story must be finished before you are excused for lunch."

"The next problem is difficult. Don't let me catch you."

"You must get at least ten problems correcct to pass you examination."

or

Examples of decreasing level of concern:

"Don't worry if you missed some. We're all having trouble."

"If you aren't finished, don't worry. There'll be plenty of time later."

"Work the first problem and then I will come by and help you with the next one."

Observing Feeling Tone

When students are presented with a new objective to be learned and are at the same time in the presence of positive (pleasant) conditions, their motivation to learn increases. Students' favorite subjects are often associated with excellent teachers who provide positive conditions.

If positive feeling tones do not work for some students, teachers may need to become a little unpleasant. Unpleasant feeling tones will also increase motivation, but to a lesser degree. The teacher should return to pleasant feeling tone as soon as the learner has performed. Neutral feeling tones do not motivate students.

The supervisor can observe the teacher motivating students through pleasant and unpleasant feeling tones. Teachers exhibit positive feeling tones by conveying a sense of commitment and excitement about what is being taught. They are quick to give and accept praise and encourage student interest.

Example of Pleasant feeling tone:

"I am really pleased to be working with a group of students who enjoy history."

Example of Unpleasant feeling tone:

"You need to show that you can do that page without any more help."

Observing Knowledge of Results

Knowing how you're doing is motivating. When working mathematics problems, it is more motivating to students to know right away if they are answering the problems correctly rather than working ten problems and waiting several days to find out if they missed any. According to the principle of knowledge of results, students should be given indication when their responses are correct or incorrect. This information should be given as quickly as possible. Ideally, the students should know an instant after they make a response whether it is appropriate or not. Even in dealing with students' responses to oral questions, the teacher should let students know when they are right and wrong.

The supervisor can observe the teacher correctly using the principle of knowledge of results:

(1) if the teacher provides consistent and immediate feedback to the student's question, "How am I doing?"

Examples:

When asking the students to work math problems, the teacher could have students write their answers on a small chalk board and hold it up so that the teacher can see the answers. The teacher should let students know immediately if their answers are correct.

or

For young students, red and green circles on tongue depressors can be used for yes and no answers.

(2) if the teacher uses constructive criticism. Feedback is often criticism. The teacher should emphasize what a student has accomplished, not just what remains to be done.

Example:

"You've almost finished your project. I've noticed that your writing is creative and that the designs are very imaginative. It seems taht you're having some trouble coming up with an ending. Things just aren't fitting together. Would you like to talk about it?"

Observing Success

A learner's motivation increases as his success increases. The greatest evil that can befall students is that they should think they cannot be successful. Very few people continue to be motivated in activities where they feel they have little or no success.

Sometimes students don't expect to do very well. They sit back and say, "On this I'm not going to succeed." This may be a realistic outlook based on previous experience. These failures happen to students every day. Students are given assignments or tests that they know they will not be able to do well on.

The supervisor can observe the teacher using the principle of success:

(1) if the teacher sets the task at the correct level of difficulty by segmenting instruction into units or increments which allows the student to progress.

Example:

If students are receiving instructions on how to file books by author, the student must already know how to alphabetize if they are to be successful.

(2) if the teacher divides the assignment into many short tasks when the learning task is lengthy. This turns a single long-distance task into many more possible short-distance successes.

Example:

Teachers who assign a book to be read within two weeks know that some students will not be successful in accomplishing this task. Teachers can help these students to be successful by stating, "This looks like a lot to read, but if you read one chapter a day, you'll have it finished in time. I'll check with each of you each day to see how you are doing."

(3) if the teacher supplies prompts when students need help. Prompts are questions or suggestions which point the learner toward the correct answer.

Example:

"I'll read a page. You be my teacher and fill in the words when I stop."

In Conclusion

The supervisory skills necessary to help teachers are varied. Supervisors' knowledge and skills in human relations, subject content, material selection and program evaluation are all necessary if supervisors are to be helpful to teachers. However, the single most important skill is the supervisor's ability to identify teacher strengths and weaknesses while observing the teacher teaching. This article has described and illustrated how a supervisor can be helpful when a teacher is having difficulty in motivating students. The supervisor can determine how effective teachers are in motivating students by using the five measures of motivation described in this framework.

A word of caution: Supervisors should not rely too heavily on the results of only one observation. Repeated observations will enable the supervisor to correctly establish a reliable measure of the teacher's ability to motivate students.

MOTIVATION FRAMEWORK SCALE

1	2	3	4	5
Inappropriate Use	**Little Appropriate Use**	**Some Appropriate Use**	**Frequent Appropriate Use**	**Constant Appropriate Use**

Inappropriate Use

Interest - Made things so vivid the the learners were distracted.

Concern - Built so much concern the learners couldn't concentrate.

Feeling tone - Used neutral feeling tones or used pleasant feeling tones when it wasn't working.

Knowledge of Results - Gave only general information.

Success - The task was so hard learners couldn't possibly do it or so easy they didn't have to try.

Appropriate Use*

Interest - Made examples interesting and meaningful.

Concern - Built learners' productive concern about learning.

Feeling tone - Used pleasant feeling tone.

Knowledge of Results - Gave specific knowledge of results.

Success - The learners experienced success.

*Note: If students are already motivated, the overuse of these principles would be an inappropriate use.

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Ronald G. McIntire is Associate Dean in the College of Education, University of Houston. He received an Ed.D. from U.C.L.A. where he served as a demonstration teacher at the University Elementary School and was Executive Officer of the Center for the Study of Evaluation. He has been a director of curriculum, principal and superintendent of schools.